



IOWA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES

Iowa DNR News

Conservation and Recreation

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Aug. 14, 2018

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Maquoketa Caves State Park to re-open Aug. 24



Maquoketa Caves State Park reopens Aug. 24 after an extensive renovation. Photo courtesy of the Iowa DNR.

MAQUOKETA – Maquoketa Caves State Park will open for visitors, including campers, on Aug. 24, just in time for fall travelers and outdoor enthusiasts.

“Maquoketa Caves is a destination for both nearby residents and visitors from across the world,” said Todd Coffelt, DNR Parks Bureau chief.

The park was closed for more than three months as it underwent extensive renovations. Along with resurfacing the road through the park, projects included:

- Dancehall Cave cleaned after many years of flood sediment
- Lighting in caves upgraded to LED for energy efficiency and increased brightness
- New footbridge on woodland trail
- New boardwalks on all trails
- All electrical campsites upgraded from 30 amp to 50 amp electrical service
- Six nonelectrical sites converted to electrical
- A new check-in station for campers
- A new parking lot with sidewalks near the cave entrance
- New roof, ceiling and lighting on shower building

Campers can make reservations immediately for the night of Aug. 24 and later by visiting the state park reservation system at <https://iowastateparks.reserveamerica.com>.

Additionally, the public is welcome to join the Dubuque, Jackson & Jones OWL (Older, Wiser, Livelier) club at 2 p.m. on Aug. 24 for a two- to three-mile guided tour of Maquoketa Caves. The hike will be followed by a cash supper at 4 p.m. at Bluff Lake Catfish Farm outside the park. To attend, RSVP by Aug. 21 by calling (563) 652-3783.

Media Contact: State Park Ranger Scott Dykstra, 563-219-4512

Heavy boat traffic expected for Labor Day Weekend

Boaters heading out for the Labor Day holiday will likely find busy waterways and lower water levels.

Susan Stocker, boating law administrator and education coordinator for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources, said boat operators need to operate with caution and to watch for hazards in the water.

Stocker said boat ramps will likely be busy, placing boating etiquette at a premium.

“Everyone is excited to get on the water,” she said. “Be patient, and when it’s your turn be ready to launch. Courtesy on the water goes a long way in avoiding problems.”

She said an obvious way to prevent problems is for boat operators to avoid alcohol while operating the craft.

“We want boaters to have fun on the water, but we don’t want that fun to end in a boating tragedy. Boaters need to keep safety in mind while on the water,” Stocker said.

Preparing for a safe day on the water begins in the driveway. Make sure to have a properly fitting life jacket for each person on board and that all of the safety equipment, including a properly working fire extinguisher, is on board.

“Remember, life jackets only work when worn,” Stocker said. “Life jackets float, you don’t.”

Boating safety tips

- Alcohol and boating don’t mix. Wind, sun, glare and heat can enhance the effects of alcohol hindering the operator’s ability to make decisions.
- Before leaving the house, check the trailer lights, wheel bearings and the hitch.
- Make sure there is a current fire extinguisher and horn/whistle, a wearable life jacket for everyone and a USCG approved throwable device onboard.
- File a float plan with a friend, including your destination, expected time of return and type of boat.
- Wear your lifejacket - it floats, you don’t.
- Inflatable lifejackets are light weight, comfortable and USCG approved. Wear it.
- Take a boater education course. It has valuable information and many insurance companies will offer a discount on boat insurance.
- Top two safety violations in Iowa are having inadequate life jackets and operating too fast and too close to other vessels.

Media Contacts:

Central and Southern Iowa - Susan Stocker, Boating Law Administrator and Education Coordinator, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 515-313-6439

Eastern Iowa – Jeff Harrison, State Conservation Officer, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 563-349-9418

Northern Iowa – Ben Bergman, State Conservation Officer, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 641-425-0828

Western Iowa – Steve Griebel, State Conservation Officer, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 712-301-4009

Two Waterloo men charged with illegally killing antlered deer

WATERLOO – On Thursday, August 2, 2018 at 1:26 a.m., Iowa Department of Natural Resources Law Enforcement Bureau was contacted by the Waterloo Police Department after they conducted a traffic stop of two males who had illegally killed two antlered deer that were still in velvet.

A DNR Conservation Officer responded and charged Paul Lu, 31, and Kyaw Wahny, 19, both of Waterloo, with a total of 14 charges related to this case, totaling \$2,244. It has been requested that each of the men pay \$4,000 for liquidated damages for the deer.

“This case was a phenomenal demonstration of agencies working together to put an end to illegal deer poaching,” said DNR Conservation Officer Dakota Drish. “These two men would likely not have been caught if it weren't for the diligence of the Waterloo police officers.”

Kyaw Wahny was charged with:

- Shooting firearm over water, highway or railroad right-of-way
- Hunting deer without a valid deer license or tag
- Hunting without a valid hunting license
- Hunting without paying the habitat fee
- Taking deer out of season
- Taking deer with a prohibited rifle.
- Warning for using an automobile to hunt deer
- Warning for hunting by artificial light

Paul Lu was charged with:

- Shooting firearm over water, highway or railroad right-of-way
- Hunting deer without a valid deer license or tag
- Hunting without a valid hunting license
- Hunting without paying the habitat fee
- Taking deer out of season
- Taking deer with a prohibited rifle.
- Using an automobile to hunt deer
- Hunting by artificial light

Note: A criminal charge is merely an accusation and a defendant is presumed innocent until proven guilty.

Media Contact: Dakota Drish, DNR Conservation Officer, 563-920-0566, Dakota.Drish@dnr.iowa.gov.

DNR to hold public meeting on proposed forest wildlife stewardship plan in Vinton

VINTON – Members of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will hold a public meeting on August 23, 2018 at 6 p.m. at the US Bank in Vinton to discuss the proposed forest wildlife stewardship plan at Dudgeon Lake Forest Wildlife Area.

The DNR will have representatives on hand from its Wildlife Bureau and Forestry Section to answer questions and discuss plans with the public.

The meeting will be held in the conference room at the US Bank, 110 West Fourth Street, in Vinton.

Any person attending the public meeting and has special requirements such as those related to mobility or hearing impairments should contact the DNR or ADA Coordinator at 515-725-8200, Relay Iowa TTY Service 800-735-7942, or Webmaster@dnr.iowa.gov, and advise of specific needs.

Media Contact: Steve Woodruff, DNR Wildlife Biologist, (319) 330-7013, Steven.Woodruff@dnr.iowa.gov; or, Mark Vitosh, DNR District Forester, (319) 351-8886, Mark.Vitosh@dnr.iowa.gov.

Deer licenses on sale Aug. 15

Licenses to pursue Iowa's world class deer herd go on sale Aug. 15 at more than 700 license sales agents statewide and online at www.iowadnr.gov.

Resident Iowa hunters may purchase one any deer license for a gun season, one any deer license for archery season and one county specific antlerless deer only license.

The number of county specific license quotas for antlerless deer only has changed for eight counties – seven counties quotas increased and one county quota decreased. Hunters may purchase one antlerless only deer license until Sept. 15, then as many as they want until the season ends or quotas fill.

Wetland complex is a backcountry escape in the heart of farm country



The Sunken Grove and Leo Shimon Marsh Wetland Complex is in the heart of the prairie pothole region where resident ducks and geese produce and raise their young. It is also an important migration stopover for ducks, geese, pelicans and shorebirds. Photo courtesy of the Iowa DNR.

Fonda, Iowa – The Sunken Grove and Leo Shimon Marsh Wetland Complex becomes Grand Central Station twice a year for migrating ducks, geese, pelicans and shorebirds that stop to rest and refuel before resuming their journey. The nearly 1,300 acres of wetlands, marshes, prairies and timber is surrounded by some of the most productive farmland in the world in southwest Pocahontas County.

“Having a spot like this in this part of the state makes a lot of the locals pretty happy it’s here,” said Clint Maddix, wildlife management biologist for the Iowa Department of Natural Resources.

“This area is one of my favorites. If you want outdoor recreation, you don’t have to go any further than this spot. There’s nothing you can’t do here: paddle, bird watch, hunt, take pictures.

“Look at it from the inside. Drive back there, it feels like it’s a different part of the state; a different part of the world, multiple ecosystems in a small package.”

The complex developed out of a mix of public land acquired by different county, state and federal agencies for public use.

Sunken Grove covers nearly 800 acres with a 240-acre marsh that has been attracting more interest from paddlers, birders and has hosted hunters from Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Leo Shimon Marsh covers 480 acres with an 80-acre marsh spread between two lobes. Pulling in to the parking lot and the new gravel boat ramp on the south end of the area a family of eight mallards decided it was time to go.

Maddix is preparing the marsh to be at crest when duck season opens. It has a nice crop of arrowhead on the southern lobe and bulrush at the outlet.

The area is in the heart of the prairie pothole region where resident ducks and geese produce and raise their young. He has a vision for the area that includes adding wetlands basins, getting water back to a drained oxbow and increasing the plant diversity on the prairie.

Battling unwanted invaders

It's a constant battle to keep carp out of the marsh, honeysuckle from the timber and cottonwoods out of the prairie and visitors can see the fight up close near the main boat ramp at Sunken Grove Lake.

Maddix said they used aerial spraying to kill honeysuckle late last fall after native species had gone dormant and then followed that up by grinding the dead honeysuckle this summer. This allows sunlight to hit the forest floor which is necessary for oak regeneration. Unfortunately, another invader has its eye on the newly opened real estate – buckthorn.

A different kind of battle is going on in the prairie and marsh.

If left unmanaged, trees will encroach on the prairie and at Leo Shimon Marsh Wetland Complex that will likely be willows or cottonwoods. Fire is used to keep trees at bay and reset the prairie allowing different plants to shine. This year happens to be a banner year for rattlesnake master.

A combination of fish barriers and water control structures are used to prevent carp and bullheads from entering the marsh and allow Maddix the ability to dewater it if any got in.

Notes

A tornado came through about seven years ago and blew down a cottonwood tree where eagles were nesting, killing one of the eagles. The surviving eagle found a new mate and built a new nest near the old one. It has been active ever since.

The area is home to a large population of great blue herons and an active heron rookery. Shorebirds, pelicans, snow geese, bitterns migrate through. Waterfowl use peaks in

October. The marsh is a popular spot with birders and a big time migration stopover after spring ice out.

Sunken Grove Lake has an area kept open near an overlook platform with picnic tables, a park grill and trash can. There is no bathroom, water or electricity available.

Pheasants and waterfowl are the top game species; deer and turkey are overlooked. It's popular with shed antler hunters, mushroom hunters

Hunters are required to use steel shot only for all hunting except for deer and turkey. No motorized boats are allowed on Leo Shimon Marsh. Boats with motors are allowed on Sunken Grove.

Media Contact: Clint Maddix, Wildlife Management Biologist, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, 712-657-2639